

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2010/53/874
Creation Date(s):	5 June 1980
Extent and medium:	5 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

00+9

5300G ESTR EI

GA

043611384+

000

000+9

5300G ESTR EI

GA

04622582+

14.01

26730 IVERN B

5300G ESTR EI

QQQQ~~~~~9+

5300G ESTR EI

916104 IVERNA G

QQQ~~~~~QQQ

0249

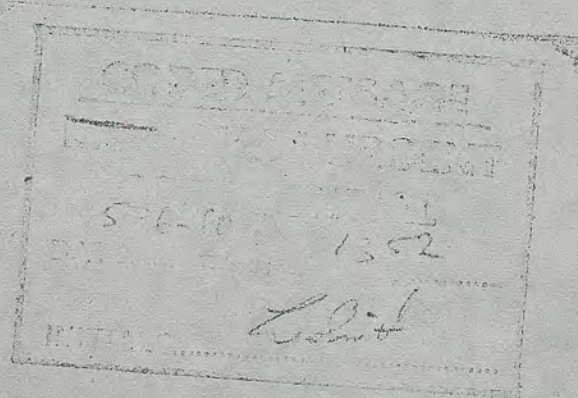
URGENT

=====

TO DUBLIN
FOR NELIGAN

FROM LONDON
FROM AMBASSADOR

MMHYGTR



I THOUGHT YOU WOULD FIND IT USEFUL TO HAVE OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN POLICY DECISIONS AT PRESENT FACING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. THERE IS A GOOD DEAL WHICH IS NECESSARILY TENTATIVE AT THIS STAGE BUT WE WOULD HOPE TO UPDATE THIS ANALYSIS AS MATTERS GROW CLEARER.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS ON NORTHERN IRELAND

1. THE WHITELAW GROUP HAS NOW TRANSMITTED TO THE FULL CABINET ATKINS' REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE TO DATE. WE DO NOT AT PRESENT DISPOSE OF PRECISE INFORMATION ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE DRAFT AND BRITISH OFFICIALS ARE VERY RELUCTANT EVEN TO DISCUSS IT. HOWEVER, OFFICIALS WHO HAVE BEEN PRESENT AT MOST OF THE CABINET SUBCOMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS DENY THAT THERE HAS BEEN ANY MAJOR CHANGE OF DIRECTION IN BRITISH MINISTERIAL THINKING AS A RESULT OF MRS THATCHER'S MEETINGS WITH MR. HUME AND THE TAOISEACH. IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE THE CASE TO DATE THAT MRS THATCHER HAS INJECTED INTO THE DISCUSSION MUCH OF THE MATERIAL FROM HER DISCUSSIONS. THE BASIC STRATEGY BEING DEVELOPED HERE EARLY IN THE YEAR IS STILL REGARDED AS BEING IN FORCE. THE MANNER IN WHICH MRS THATCHER WILL REACT TO THE STATE OF THE DRAFT AS IT EMERGES FROM THE WHITELAW GROUP IS REGARDED HERE AS VERY DIFFICULT TO PREDICT.

2. BRITISH OFFICIALS SAY THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS GOING AHEAD WITH THE TACTIC WHICH WAS BEING CONTEMPLATED PRIOR TO 21 MAY CONCERNING THE NEXT STAGE OF THE CONFERENCE. IN EFFECT, THIS MEANS THE PUBLICATION, PROBABLY AT THE END OF THIS MONTH OR BEGINNING OF JULY (TO MESH IN WITH THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION RENEWAL DEBATE AT WESTMINSTER IN THE WEEK OF 7 JULY), OF A NEW WHITE PAPER. AS PREVIOUSLY INDICATED THIS PAPER WILL PROBABLY BE "WHITE" ONLY IN NAME. IT WILL NOT PROPOSE A SINGLE GOVERNMENT POLICY BUT WILL RECOMMEND CONTINUING DISCUSSION OF A LIMITED RANGE OF POLICIES. OUTSIDE CABINET AND OFFICIAL CIRCLES, SOME ARE TENDING TO QUESTION THE WISDOM OF PUBLISHING A NEW PAPER AT THIS STAGE. THE ALTERNATIVE VIEW IS THAT IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO PROCEED TO A NEW ROUND OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES, INCLUDING THE OUP, WITHOUT TYING THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDS WITH A NEW PAPER, HOWEVER "GREEN" IN CONTENT SUCH A PAPER MIGHT BE. THE POINT IS, OF COURSE, OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST TO US AS A DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH A NEW WHITE PAPER WOULD IMPLY, IF ONLY TEMPORARILY, A PUBLIC REJECTION BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT OF THE POINTS THAT HAVE BEEN PUT TO THEM BY BOTH THE TAOISEACH AND MR. HUME DURING MAY. IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT DISCUSSION IN THE WHITELAW GROUP HAS ACCEPTED THAT SOMETHING WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE COMING MONTH VIRTUALLY WITHOUT ~~W~~ CONSIDERATION OF THE ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS.

3. AT THIS STAGE THERE SEEMS BUT LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE SORT OF WHITE PAPER THAT IS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY BRITISH OFFICIALS AND, PRESUMABLY, BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IS ONE WHICH WOULD BE SIMILAR IN GENERAL FORM TO THE ATKINS PAPER OF NOVEMBER, 1979 BUT WHICH WOULD BE MUCH MORE NARROWLY FOCUSED THAN THAT DOCUMENT WAS. IN EFFECT, IT WILL OFFER A CHOICE BETWEEN TWO OR PERHAPS THREE MODELS. ONE MODEL WILL BE MAJORITY RULE WITH SAFEGUARDS, WHICH HAS BEEN THE PREFERRED BRITISH MODEL AT LEAST FOR THE LAST SIX MONTHS OR SO. THE SAFEGUARDS WILL HAVE TO BE SET OUT IN SOME DETAIL AND MAY WELL INCLUDE BOTH A MECHANISM FOR FINANCIAL CONTROL AND A QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTE/ENTRENCHMENT MECHANISM.

IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW THE ALTERNATIVE WILL BE DESIGNED. ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE, WHETHER REAL OR MERELY PURPORTED, WILL BE TO KEEP THE SDLP IN THE CONFERENCE BUT AS BOTH POWERSHARING AND THE SDLP'S VIEW OF AN IRISH DIMENSION HAVE ALREADY BEEN RULED OUT, IT IS NOT EASY TO DESIGN A MODEL WHICH WILL KEEP THE SDLP TALKING. A SECONDARY PURPOSE OF THE MODEL WILL BE TO PAINT THE SDLP AS UNREASONABLE SHOULD THEY DECIDE TO PULL OUT AT THIS STAGE. IT IS LIKELY THEREFORE THAT THIS MODEL WILL BE DETAILED, INGENIOUS BUT PROBABLY ALSO UNWORKABLE. IT MIGHT DERIVE FROM SOMETHING LIKE THE MAWHINNEY SUGGESTION OR FROM THE TWO-TIER SYSTEM DESCRIBED BY KAPPA OF THE BBC ON 4 JUNE AND REFLECTED IN TODAY'S GUARDIAN AND FINANCIAL TIMES. IF THE BRITISH OPT, AS THEY SEEM LIKELY TO DO, FOR AN ATTEMPT TO KEEP IN BEING A CONFERENCE TO WHICH THEIR OWN ANALYSTS GIVE LITTLE HOPE OF SUCCESS, THEN, WITHIN THAT OVERALL STRATEGY, A PRINCIPAL TACTICAL OBJECTIVE WILL BE TO ENSURE THAT ANY COLLAPSE OF THE CONFERENCE IS LAID TO THE DOOR EITHER OF THE SDLP OR OF OUR GOVERNMENT.

4. IT WILL BE CLEAR THAT MUCH OF THE ABOVE IS BASED ON AN ASSUMPTION THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE PREPARED AT THIS STAGE TO ACCEPT THE ARGUMENTS PUT TO MRS. THATCHER ON 21 MAY BY THE TAOISEACH AND WILL NOT PUT THE CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN THEREFROM INTO EFFECT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THIS ASSUMPTION IS INACCURATE. HOWEVER, ALL THE EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY INDICATES THAT NO ALTERNATIVE APPROACH HAS BEEN GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AT ANY LEVEL SHORT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FULL CABINET. IT REMAINS POSSIBLE THAT THE ESSENTIAL CONTRADICTION WHICH REMAINS WILL BE RESOLVED BY THE POLITICAL DRIVE AND CONVICTION OF THE PRIME MINISTER. (THE CONTRADICTION REFERRED TO IS THAT WHILE OFFICIALS AND COMMENTATORS AGREE THAT THE CONFERENCE PROCEDURE HAS NO FUTURE, THE SAME OFFICIALS AND THE RESPONSIBLE MINISTERS LACK THE POLITICAL WILL OR FLEXIBILITY TO ABANDON THE PROCEDURE UNTIL IT HAS FINALLY BROKEN DOWN. INCIDENTALLY, NOT ALL OBSERVERS CONCLUDE THAT THE FAILURE OF THE CONFERENCE WILL IMPLY THE REEXAMINATION OF THE PROPOSALS SUGGESTED BY THE TAOISEACH AND THE SDLP. FOR EXAMPLE, WITHIN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD PREFER NEITHER SUPPORT FOR THE OFFICIAL UNIONIST PARTY OR THE ATTEMPTED ABSORPTION OF NORTHERN IRELAND BY INTEGRATION WITHIN THE UK, TOGETHER WITH THE GRANTING OF INCREASED RW POWERS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

PAGE 4

THERE IS NO DISCERNIBLE CONFIDENCE AMONG BRITISH OFFICIALS AT PRESENT THAT A NEW WHITE PAPER COULD ENABLE SIGNIFICANT FURTHER PROGRESS TO BE MADE AT THE CONFERENCE. ON THE CONTRARY, NOT ONLY THE SLIPPAGE IN THE TIMING OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE DOCUMENT BUT ALSO THE VIEWS ATTRIBUTED TO SENIOR OFFICIALS BY JOURNALISTS AND OTHER THIRD PARTY CONTACTS TEND TO CONFIRM THAT THE PRESENT STRATEGY IS UNWORKABLE. IT IS, THEREFORE, LIKELY THAT POLITICALLY VERY ASTUTE OFFICIALS, SUCH AS KENNETH STOWE, ARE

GIVING CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT TO ENSURING THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ARE NOT HELD RESPONSIBLE BY PUBLIC OPINION FOR FAILURE. CLEARLY, IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW THAT EITHER THE SDLP OR OUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE SEEN TO HAVE BEHAVED IN AN UNREASONABLE FASHION. IT IS THEREFORE, LIKELY THAT THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES WILL ALSO SUGGEST SOME FORM OF PARALLEL MECHANISMS WHICH WILL GIVE EXPRESSION TO THE LONDON/DUBLIN DIMENSION OF THE THREE-WAY COMPLEX OF RELATIONS THAT WE HAVE SUGGESTED. THERE SEEMS TO BE NO WILLINGNESS TO DEAL WITH NORTH/SOUTH ELEMENT AT THIS STAGE AND, INDEED, THERE IS AN ATTEMPT TO CLAIM THE SUPPORT OF THE SDLP FOR THE THESIS THAT SIGNIFICANT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC AND NORTHERN IRELAND CAN ONLY DEVELOP WHEN THERE IS A NORTHERN IRELAND AUTHORITY TO WHICH THE DUBLIN GOVERNMENT CAN RELATE.

6. SEAMUS MALLON POINTED OUT IN HIS CONTACTS IN LONDON THIS WEEK THAT THE SDLP NEITHER WILL NOR CAN ACCEPT A NEXT STAGE WHICH DOES NOT ADEQUATELY TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE ALL-IRELAND DIMENSION. HE HAS ALSO BEEN EMPHASISING THE FRAGILITY OF THE SDLP IF THERE IS NOT INSTITUTED SOME POLITICAL PROCESS IN WHICH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINORITY CAN PLAY A POSITIVE EXECUTIVE ROLE AND HE HAS UNDERLINED THE DANGER THAT IN ITS ABSENCE THE GUNMEN WILL GAIN SUPPORT. THERE IS NOT TO DATE ANY EVIDENCE

HERE THAT THESE POINTS ARE ACCEPTED EITHER IN WHITEHALL OR IN WESTMINSTER.

7. RECENT CONTACTS WITH THE CONSERVATIVE BACK-BENCH COMMITTEE ON NORTHERN IRELAND HAVE TENDED TO EMPHASISE THE STILL ESSENTIALLY NEGATIVE APPROACH. THE SDLP ARE SEEN TO DEPEND ON PRESSURE FROM DUBLIN TO PUT THEIR POINT OF VIEW ACROSS TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND THERE IS CONSEQUENT "UNIONIST" PRESSURE TO EXPRESS CONTRARY VIEWS IN REACTION. LESS UNIONIST ELEMENTS AMONG CONSERVATIVE BACK-BENCHERS MAINTAIN THAT THE EMPHASIS BY THE DUBLIN GOVERNMENT ON GIVING FORMAL EXPRESSION TO THE IRISH DIMENSION MAKES THE REALITY OF COOPERATION MORE DIFFICULT TO ATTAIN.

8. ONE CONSERVATIVE BACK-BENCHER, MR BRIAN MAWHINNEY, RECENTLY SUGGESTED INFORMALLY THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MIGHT MOVE IN THE DIRECTION THAT WE HAVE SUGGESTED BY STATING THAT THEY WOULD REMAIN FORMALLY NEUTRAL ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER A MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WOULD WISH NORTHERN IRELAND TO TRANSFER FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM TOWARDS AN ALL-IRELAND UNIT. IT IS DR MAWHINNEY'S VIEW THAT NO BRITISH GOVERNMENT COULD MOVE ANY FURTHER THAN THIS IN THE DIRECTION WE ARE REQUESTING. EVEN IF THEY ACCEPTED THE NEED TO MOVE FURTHER IN OUR DIRECTION, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD ALSO HAVE TO RECKON WITH CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS OF CONSERVATIVE BACK BENCHERS WHO CONTINUE TO FAVOUR A "LOCAL GOVERNMENT SOLUTION". ATKINS HAS MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT HE COULD NOT SUPPORT A "LOCAL GOVERNMENT" APPROACH AND WHILE HE REMAINS IN CONTROL OF EVENTS IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT SUCH A SOLUTION WOULD BE ACCEPTED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. IF, HOWEVER, THE ATKINS APPROACH RUNS INTO THE SANDS IT MAY BE THAT A NEW SECRETARY OF STATE MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO OPT FOR SUCH A SIMPLISTIC APPROACH AS WAS INDEED FAVOURED AT ONE TIME BY AIREY NEAVE.

9. IT WOULD SEEM IMPORTANT, THEREFORE, TO PUT TOGETHER A PRESENTATION WHICH COULD FORCIBLY BE PUT TO BRITISH MINISTER IN THE COMING WEEKS. SUCH A PRESENTATIONS WOULD NEED TO BE CAREFULLY DRAWN UP BUT IT SHOULD POSSIBLY EMPHASISE THE FOLLOWING POINTS.

PAGE 6

- (1) THE CONFERENCE PROCESS IN OUR VIEW HAS NO FUTURE
- (11) TO PERSEVERE WITH THE CONFERENCE PROCESS FOR PURELY FORMAL REASONS WOULD BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS BECAUSE OF THE DAMAGE WHICH MAY BE DONE TO THE SDLP.
- (111) THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, THEREFORE, NEEDS TO CONSIDER WAYS OF BROADENING THE BASIS OF FURTHER INITIATIVES INCLUDING BOTH MEANS OF INDUCING THE UNIONISTS OF VARIOUS COLOURS TO PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS AND ALSO TO PROVIDE AN ALL-IRELAND DIMENSION WHICH OFFERS TO THE MINORITY AN ASSURANCE THAT ITS ASPIRATIONS ALSO ARE BEING CONSIDERED.

~~~~~  
AS REGARDS TIMING, IT IS TO BE ANTICIPATED THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TAKEN AT LEAST PRELIMINARY DECISIONS ON THE NEXT STEPS BEFORE THE MIDDLE OF THE MONTH.

END

HS 5/6/80

TIME: 13-50

③

5300G ESTR EI

916104 IVERNA G

ANY PLO